

Wong, Linda (BOS)

From: John Avalos <johnavalos2020@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 2, 2020 12:58 PM
To: Fewer, Sandra (BOS)
Cc: Boilard, Chelsea (BOS); Lerma, Santiago (BOS); Ronen, Hillary; Walton, Shamann (BOS); tracy.brown@sfgov.org; Mandelman, Rafael (BOS); Yee, Norman (BOS); erika.maybaum@sfgov.org; Hsieh, Frances (BOS); Wong, Linda (BOS)
Subject: Hearing on Current Year Rebalancing Plan: Stand w/D11 on Affordable Housing

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June 2, 2020

Dear Chair Fewer,

It's with some alarm that I write to you today requesting that the budget committee express strong opposition to the Mayor cutting over 200 units of District 11 affordable housing projects. I was served in your budget chair seat for two budget cycles during the Great Recession when the city was facing a \$500M budget deficit. I know how incredibly difficult it is to be Budget Chair, especially during this public health and economic crisis.

Like you, I started as an organizer with Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth, later to become a Member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors.

At Coleman, I was the first to engage the D11 community around the City budget. Since 2000, I have been a part of a growing and vibrant constituency engaged in community development. Together, with Communities United for Health and Justice, we brought forth new leaders, activated parks and open space, created public art along Mission Street, expanded and opened senior centers, fostered many youth development programs, centered workforce development programs in D11 like Excelsior Works, won community gardens like Hummingbird Garden and Sisterhood Farms, and so much more. None of these types of projects existed in D11 20 years ago.

The D11 community development effort's greatest achievement is the two affordable housing sites (Balboa Park Station's Upper Yard and 4840 Mission Street) that are before the Budget and Appropriations Committee. The D11 community struggled for 20 years to get these projects in the MOH housing pipeline.

I know that you have the world on your shoulders and that you have nothing more than your bully pulpit to urge the Mayor to keep these two projects in the budget and not punt them to a source of funding that has not yet been secured. Fate, it seems, is not without a sense of irony.

Compounding the irony is what it took to get the seed money for these two housing projects. It took an 8-year inside-outside partnership between the D11 community and me, their district supervisor, to raise an organized constituency to fight for affordable housing in a district that City Hall mistakenly

thought solely consisted of single-family homes. Rather, we are made up of many tenancies of essential workers and families struggling to stay in San Francisco. We had to fight to convince our neighbors and City Hall that preserving D11 as a working and middle-class district was worth the investment so that we would not face the rapid gentrification that has overwhelmed many other parts of the city.

Throughout my tenure at the Board, I worked closely with the community to champion several initiatives to bring revenue and affordable housing dollars to the City; including the Real Estate Transfer Tax of 2010 on luxury property, the Gross Receipts Tax and the City's Housing Trust Fund, and the Affordable Housing Bond of 2015 that finally put D11 on the affordable housing map. Mayor Lee sought to cut the Housing Bond in half and to cut out our D11 projects, yet we rallied together during the 2015 budget process to win back our projects in D11 and even some in D9.

The week before I left office in 2017, the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development awarded seed money for D11's two affordable projects. Unfortunately, under the current D11 Supervisor, the constituency that had been built around these two projects no longer had an ally. The projects took an *inside only* track and stalled out, most likely due to political interference from the current D11 Supervisor, who along with his real estate and developer cronies, had their own designs for these projects and what they would mean for the public.

Chair Fewer, I personally know how hard it is to safeguard this funding but based on the years of work of the D11 community against the decades of indifference at City Hall I urge you to rally your colleagues on the committee to speak out vehemently against these cuts to D11 affordable housing. These cuts fly in the face of the Mayor's work on neighborhood preference and your work on racial equity. Please don't let the Mayor set D11's affordable housing projects back another few years.

San Francisco needs a just recovery. We must rebuild our City around essential workers with racial equity in mind. D11 is a crucial part of the city where our essential workers -- Black, Brown, and Asian -- the people most vulnerable to inequity and the current pandemic, must have a future. Today, these two D11 projects are ground zero for the soul of the city and A Just Recovery. We hope you can speak alongside the D11 community to advocate for these projects.

Thank you for your tremendous dedication to this City.

Yours in struggle,

John Avalos